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Board Meetings for 2016:

- **October 26, 2016**
- **November 16, 2016**
- **December 14, 2016**

*Meetings are Wednesday
evenings and begin at 6:00 p.m. at
Post House, 40 Clinton Avenue in
the first-floor meeting room.*



Guests at Fairgate Farm's 2015 Harvest Festival enjoyed face painting, husking corn and many other activities. See page 4 for details on the upcoming Harvest Festival, being held October 22nd.

Learning to Manage Compost is a Healthy Twist on Waste

As we reap our fall harvest at Fairgate Farm and look back on our successful 2016 growing and learning season, it is time to contemplate what we'll be planting for 2017, and how to continue "growing" community support, educational outreach and the health and wellness improvements that are benefitting our community as much as the vegetables and fruit we produce.

Unless you're new to the West Side, you know that Charter Oak Communities (COC) transformed dilapidated public housing along Stillwater Avenue into Fairgate Farm – a thriving, urban, community farm that has provided locally grown food to volunteers and nonprofits. The Farm also offers an array of environmental, nutritional and healthy programs to disadvantaged kids, adults and families. Based on our mission and successes, the **Fairgate Farm Community Composting Initiative** was developed and was recently awarded a \$25,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The grant will allow us to better educate residents and businesses about composting, increase food recovery rates and empower low-income community members to advance their own food security. The Initiative is at the core of COC and Fairgate Farm's mission to achieve food justice in the West Side by allowing all community members to exercise their right to grow and eat healthy food.



The Composting Initiative will be managed by COC with assistance from the City of Stamford, the Food Bank of Lower Fairfield County, Connecticut Food Bank, Franklin Street Works, New Covenant Center, Scofield Manor, ShopRite and Starbucks. COC has also partnered with others to implement an array of public health initiatives supported by federal, local and philanthropic resources in the West Side through the Vita Health and Wellness Initiative. The composting project is a logical extension of the outreach and community education already taking place under Vita. *(Continued to Page 3)*





COC Advisory Board Member: Ligia Marroquin



Ligia Marroquin has served on the COC Advisory Board since March 2016. In this capacity, she shares her experience and knowledge with the Board of Commissioners, offers feedback on projects and issues, and takes on special assignments or tasks as required.

Ligia moved to Queens from Guatemala at the age of five with her mom, dad and older sisters. Her family then moved to Stamford when she was seven years old. Her mother cleaned homes in Fairfield County and her father would become a licensed electrician. Her parent's work had a big influence on how she viewed the world. Ligia graduated from Westhill High School and then the New York Institute of Technology with a Bachelor of Science degree in Architectural Technology. During college, Ligia studied abroad where she sketched buildings and plazas in Venice, Milan, Florence and Pisa, Italy. It was during this period that Ligia developed her appreciation for connecting with other cultures, languages and ethnic foods.

After college she worked on high-end residential projects in the Pound Ridge area and brownstone renovations in Brooklyn Heights. Her trajectory in New York concluded in employment with Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum's (HOK). She was located at their Manhattan offices, where she worked on 3D design construction drawings for research laboratories.

When the economy plummeted during the recession of 2008 to 2010, Ligia lost her job and decided to reexamine her career aspirations. Her reevaluation and research led to her most recent position as Constituent Services Representative for Congressman Jim Himes. That focus was immigration casework and immigration/Hispanic outreach, including advocating on behalf of constituents, representing the congressman at events and staying up-to-date with the latest legislative issues in Congress.

Ligia described the role with Congressman Himes as challenging, adding "My empathy ran deep when constituents were in incredibly difficult situations, and I was limited by what I could do to help; but then there were the extremely rewarding cases where we could make a difference!"

Ligia was also able to attend training at the Women's Campaign School at Yale University. This program motivates women to be more politically involved. Her training, she explained, can be summed up with the quote, "If not now, when? If not me, then who?"

Ligia's role in public service has led her to pursue a Master's degree in Public Administration at Fairfield University. Ligia believes her knowledge of two cultures will be useful in future work. Growing up in Stamford, away from her roots, and visiting family in Guatemala every couple of years was difficult because her heart was split between two places. She hopes to incorporate her future career with research in Guatemala.

In her free time, Ligia enjoys journal writing, Latin dancing and taking a class every now and again in the nostalgic dance of the Argentine tango. Remembering her trip to Machu Picchu in Peru, Ligia is ready to pack her suitcase for her next adventure!

Community Engagement on the East Side

Family Centers, Inc. and COC hosted a community event at Oak Park in August. Over 100 COC residents of all ages attended and enjoyed the great outdoors with fellow neighbors, family and friends. The event included a colorful bounce house, which the kids loved! There also were games, popcorn and ice cream treats, and a bike raffle for children in attendance.



Adults enjoyed watching the children and reminiscing about their younger years. Other adults were tossing footballs, and teenagers were discussing the latest fashion trends. Everyone stated they had a great time and expressed their interests for similar events in the future!



Resident Corner: Bob Bowron

Bob Bowron has lived at Glenbrook Manor since 2007. An active resident, he assists his neighbors in many ways. Bob has been president of the Tenants Association for nine years. He is pleased to report, "Our Association is successful due to the fact that we have great committee members. They include: Dolores Rovella, vice president; Carolyn Rosen, treasurer; and Helen Waldman, Secretary. Veronica Waite, Lillian Johnson, Pete Kopek and Sinette Day are contributing members to the success of our Tenants Association."

Bob enjoys being president of the Association and assisting fellow residents. Every other month meetings are held and include discussions on Medicare, Medicaid, SNAP, building concerns, rent rebates and other current events. He also takes pride in being a caretaker for some of the residents at Glenbrook, which includes shopping and doctor appointments.

Bob and his fellow Association members hold social functions for the Glenbrook residents. The recent ice cream social had a great turnout, as well as other socials throughout the year including an international dinner, Thanksgiving dinner, pizza party and Sunday brunch.

Bob and the Tenant Association members take great pride in helping the

Stamford community. They have partnered with the First Congregational Church in Stamford by collecting donations and making contributions with numerous items throughout the year. Last winter they held a food drive and collected over \$500 of food. In June and July they collected sample-sized toiletries for Inspirica, an organization in Stamford that serves people who are homeless. This December will include their annual collection for Toys for Tots, which benefits many needy families.

Born in Springfield, Massachusetts, Bob was one of seven siblings. Most of his childhood was spent in Stamford, where he went to Stamford High School and then married. Bob has four grown children and three grandchildren in the area. This summer he enjoyed family cookouts and seeing his grandchildren. The next large family event Bob is looking forward to is his niece's wedding in October.

Bob has had various jobs over the years, including being in customer service, payroll and international banking with Union Trust. He also worked in real



estate and had his own commercial and residential cleaning company. Additionally, he worked for HUD in the tax department and then as a Housing Counselor.

Work came to a halt in 1999 when Bob had a terrible accident. He had a spinal cord injury and lost all motor skills for six months. Bob required two plates in his spine and developed spinal stenosis. For months Bob struggled to regain his motor skills at an acute rehabilitation facility. He described it as one of the most difficult times in his life.

Bob has had his challenges in life. But, he has responded by making volunteering and giving back to the community a priority!

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design programs custom-fit to the needs of the community. His goal will be to increase the number of organizations participating and coordinating with local non-profits, businesses and community groups to increase awareness about composting as a form of pollution prevention and a way to combat climate change. This effort is intended to create a replicable, scalable model for other composting projects while increasing community engagement through education and volunteering.

Farm Coordinator/Community Builder Maxon Keating will serve as the director for the Composting Initiative. Maxon will work with partner agencies and volunteers to determine and

"By working in collaboration with businesses, organizations and individuals, the community as a whole will learn the importance of composting, while experiencing the impact of this important sustainability effort first hand," says Maxon. "It's a typical reaction to commonly look at food scraps as waste. I'm excited to help address this misperception so we can see food scraps for what they truly are: A valuable resource that's crucial in local sustainable agriculture."

The project team will track project results. Goals include diverting 15,000 pounds of waste from Stamford's waste stream in 2016; and 15 percent more each year. Thereafter, plans call for providing local urban gardens, community partners and volunteers with compost for food production and garden beautification. Additionally, volunteer hours will be expanded for physical activity and community service. Long-term outcomes of the composting project include raising awareness and changing behavior toward environmentally sustainable food recovery practices that benefit everyone.



Harvest Festival

Fairgate Farm ~ 129 Stillwater Avenue

Saturday, October 22nd from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

A Fall festival highlighting fresh organic fall vegetables, featuring farm tours, kids crafts, cooking demonstrations, recipes, food samples and music. Fun, free and open to all!

Make New Friends, But Keep the Old: My Experience at Scofield Manor

By: Alexa Griffin

Resident Services Coordinator for Family Centers, Inc.

The residents of Scofield Manor are some of the most resilient individuals I've ever met. The relationships they have with the staff are incredible and built on mutual respect and understanding.

This past June, long-time employee and Director of Recreation Anne Salthouse retired. Although the residents loved and admired Anne, they stayed strong during the weeks prior to her departure. Thanks to the close partnership of Charter Oak Communities and Family Centers, a new opportunity for growth was created, and I was hired as the new resident services coordinator at Scofield Manor. Instead of complaining about the change, residents sang songs of praise for the woman who spent nearly 20 years in their home. They welcomed me with open arms from the time I arrived in the building.

Since June it has been a whirlwind of new faces and exciting activities. Through interviews and assessments with residents and staff, I've developed a calendar that includes a variety of activities. Favorites such as Political Chat Group, Men's Group and Complicated Coloring have remained on our weekly schedule as favorites. Games like Bingo and Music Appreciation have been adapted and are now bringing in a larger group than before. New groups, such as Crafts & Conversation, Mythology Mondays and Poet's Society have shown great promise in reaching residents that are looking for educational activities.

I am incredibly thankful to both Charter Oak Communities and Family Centers for allowing me to be a part of the Scofield Manor team. I am pleased to be included in the respectful relationships between staff and residents and aspire to everyone's goals of self-sufficiency and happiness for all residents.